

Newsletter

THIS ISSUE

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Dear Friends,

Mandatory reporting laws exist in some form in all 50 states. These laws were enacted as one measure to protect children from child abuse and neglect. There are professions that are required by law to report known or suspected abuse. These professionals are called mandated reporters. They must report any known or suspected child abuse and neglect or if they have reason to believe that a child

has been threatened or is at risk for abuse to occur. The four categories of abuse that apply are physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect.

According to Wisconsin Reporting Laws “Mandated reporters are required to report known or suspected abuse or neglect of a child under the age of 18 immediately to either child protection services or law enforcement. Law enforcement is required to report abuse or neglect to child protective services (CPS) within 12 hours. For more information, see Chapter 48.981(2) of the Wisconsin State Statutes. Adults who were abused under the age of 18 and wish to report their abuse may file a report with law enforcement. There are criminal statutes of limitations specific to abuse and neglect of children and these time frames and limitations differ depending upon the type of crime committed.” (www.preventchildabusewi.org)

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee’s policy on mandatory reporting can be found at www.archmil.org under Resources. Note that many of us may not fall into the professions that are mandated to report child abuse and neglect, however the Archdiocese of Milwaukee believes that we are all morally mandated to protect children. If you suspect a child that you know is being abused or at risk for abuse, please take the time to call it in to your local law enforcement agency or to child protective services. If the child is in imminent danger, call 911. If you are not sure who to call, you can call the National Child Abuse Hotline, 800-4-A-CHILD.

Sincerely,
Amy Peterson

Frequently Asked Questions About Mandatory Reporting:

Q. Can I be personally sued if I report abuse of a child?

A. *A person who reports child abuse has immunity and is protected legally if the report is made in “good faith.”*

Q. I am afraid to report for the sake of the child because there may be retaliation towards the child due to the report.

A. *It is important to remember that if abuse is occurring, it is most likely to continue if you don’t report it. In the short term there may be a risk of escalation, so remember that you can also express your concern for the child with other adults who may be in a position to be vigilant and in a good position to reach out to the child, for example the child’s school counselor.*

Frequently Asked Questions About Mandatory Reporting Continued:

Q. Will my name or place of employment be revealed to the family or alleged perpetrator?

A. *Your name is confidential and is not given out. However, if there is a hearing or trial you may have to testify in court as a witness.*

Q. What if I report and nothing happens?

A. *First, remember that child protective service agencies — most of which are under-funded and over burdened — exist to prevent imminent harm to a child. They are unlikely to have the resources to intervene except in the most severe cases. Child protective service agencies keep a record of every complaint and it is possible that you are not the first or last person to call in a report and the record of the call is important information.*

Q. I have a special relationship with this child and by reporting am I betraying that trust?

A. *If you are a mandatory reporter, you should, when appropriate, let the child know. It is because you are a trusted adult that you must act in the best interest of the child and that you do not have a choice but to report. If you are not a mandatory reporter but a concerned adult, you could work with the child to understand the reason for reporting and work together to that end.*

Mandated Reporters in the State of Wisconsin

Clergy (2003 Wisconsin Acct 279)
 School administrators, teacher, counselors
 Child care workers in any day care center or child caring institution
 Physicians
 Coroner
 Medical examiners
 Nurses
 Dentists
 Chiropractors
 Acupuncturists
 Optometrists
 All medical and mental health professionals
 Day care providers
 Alcohol and drug abuse counselors
 Marriage and family therapists
 Treatment staff employed by or working under contract with a community board
 Professional counselors
 Physical therapists
 Speech therapists
 Audiologists
 Dieticians
 Paramedics
 Emergency medical technicians
 Social or public assistance workers
 Police and law enforcement officers
 Mediator under section 767.11

This information was obtained from Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin. For more information on Mandatory Reporting visit <http://www.wcwt.wisc.edu/MandatedReporterTraining.aspx>

REASONS TO REPORT

There can be long term consequences to children who experience childhood abuse or neglect. They can experience the following: Taken from Children's Hospital SCAN-MRT Program

- Cognitive impairment (Mental retardation, learning disabilities)
- Physical disabilities (Shaken baby syndrome, blindness, seizures, quadriplegia, feeding problems)
- Substance abuse (3 times more likely to drink alcohol and two times more likely to use illicit drugs)
- Poor school performance (Truancy, absenteeism, lower test scores)
- Psychological problems (Poor self esteem, suicidal behavior, depression and/or anxiety)
- Criminality (26% of abused children will become delinquents)
- Financial cost to society (loss of productivity and cost of treatment)

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